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identified with the evercoming Son of Man.

Even in the Apocalypse, the textbook of the pre-millenarians, comings of Christ are mentioned which cannot be taken as literal reincarnations: for example in 3:20, "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup

with him and he with me." Finally is it not necessary for Christ to come in a community in order to come completely? This seems to be suggested in Eph. 1:23, where His body, the church, is called "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," or, as the words might mean, "the fulness of him that all in all is being fulfilled."

A PLEA FOR A SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY

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Theological opinion is different from ecclesiastical dogma. It is always in the process of becoming something other than it is. The human mind is restless until it finds its religious and scientific knowledge at peace one with the other. The real difficulties in our theology are not so much in the field of experience as in the use of standardized scientific concepts to describe and legitimize that experience intellectually. That is to say, it is a means by which our religious experiences are thought into harmony with the mass of reality which is given us outside of reality. It goes without saying that it must change. To this end, whatever may be our personal reaction toward the suggestions of Professor Ackerman, we welcome his exposition of a new method in theological procedure.

As the dominant interest of philosophers of the present day is to develop a scientific philosophy and the point of departure toward this end is the abandonment of metaphysics, so it should be the main ambition of theologians to develop a scientific theology, and the *terminus a quo* toward this goal will be the abandonment of mysticism, the metaphysics of religion. Mysticism is practically equivalent to metaphor, and to achieve a release from the picturesque means searching more profoundly for the

reality that underlies the religious imagination. To surrender the metaphor will not necessitate the denial or loss of any part of the reality of religious experience, but it will mean the substitution of more exact and concrete definitions for the abstractions and personifications that have so long prevailed in the field of doctrine at the expense of intellectual conscientiousness. Most of our religious reals are symbolically conceived, and the picture obscures the truth about the fact. Religious concepts, especially in

the realm of spirituality, must be reduced to a more concrete form, intelligible to the scientific mind.

What is needed is an intellectual rebirth, a rational conversion, a mental penance of extra-hard thinking that will reform the naïve idealities of religious thought into plain matter-of-fact statements acceptable in the realm of material science; for unless a man is born again intellectually he cannot see the Kingdom of God. We must become children again in intelligence, taking up once more the simpler idea, the concrete form, the tangible reality, and proceeding from that to the new construction of a realistic and materialistic theology. When Phillip asked our Lord to show him the Father he sought to approach God in some extraordinary and supernatural way. This amounted to asking for a definition of God in mystical or metaphysical concepts. Christ told him it could not be done. He had no revelation of God to give that was not natural and tangible and material. One might perceive God only as man perceived any other kind of reality. He had no other revelation to give of the Father save that which was manifestly visible in himself, in flesh and blood, in tangible forms of reality common to all human experience. When John dealt with the nature of God under the concept of the *logos*, borrowed from Greek philosophy through Philo, he makes it clear that this *logos* is not a metaphysical reality but the actual person of Christ which their hands have touched and handled. The whole point of his gospel is directed against the Alexandrian metaphysics and seeks to interpret the *logos* in terms of the human nature of Christ, who

walked and talked upon the earth **as man** in material form.

As spiritual growth necessitates moral changes in the will, so the life of the mind requires intellectual changes in keeping with mental development and the clarification of consciousness. Intellectuality is as susceptible to sterility of thought as will is to the inertia of habit and custom. The spirit of truth needs the constant refreshment of clearer understanding and deeper insight into the nature of all realms of religious value. Consequently to achieve this end the inherited doctrinal generalizations of dead generations must be dissolved over again into their primary constituents so that they may be resolidified into a brighter crystal—or, better, kept liquefied in order to prevent their hardening into intractable forms.

It is with a generous criticism that one should approach the truth systems of authoritative religion, recognizing them not as simply antique and outworn, but as gauging their real potentiality for reinterpretation and reconstruction. Theology has its hopeful as well as its hopeless side to the sympathetic critic, and there is bound to be a messianic age in store for the queen of the sciences, but only through a rational conversion. The Christian mind calls for prophets who will show the way toward intellectual repentance and for evangelists who will preach a gospel of intelligence; the prophets must be philosophers with a pragmatic spirit (like the Hebrew authors of the Wisdom literature), and the new evangelists must be theologians with a scientific interest whom the world still awaits.

We are in want of both today. The reborn religious intelligence requires, not rational repentance alone, but a gospel of practical truth and applied theology. Consequently it is not mere restatement of the old truths that is called for, but a specific kind of restatement, namely, a reinterpretation in practical terms. To realize this desideratum, this vital objective, some recent efforts have been made by "going back to Christ." Some have thought that the church has sadly misunderstood the master and has passed beyond the bounds of the primitive faith. Safety lay in a fresh start. These endeavors, courageously undertaken, have nevertheless had no real success, and the failure has been due, not to the reluctance of the world to follow back if need be, but to the actual impossibility of so doing.

Christ, the author of our salvation, is not resident in the past. Others, therefore, having taken a step into the future, have responded antiphonally to the cry, "Back to Christ," with another theme, "On to Christ," which makes a pretty harmony, no doubt, but is not a summary of the truth. For Christ is not to be found in the future any more than in the past. The futurists have contended that we have failed to understand the Christian message because the Lord was too far ahead of humanity. The poor idealists! They have been more misguided than those who advocated a return to the primitive faith. These pioneers of a new religion have been by far the poorer shepherds of the two. It is not a new religion that is wanted. The truth of the matter is that Christ is not a God of the past nor

a God of the future, but a God of the present, and the present is "the fulness of time." Here is the essence of the Christian religion: God with us now, the kingdom in our midst. This is the reason we feel a real pity for those who would urge us to retrace our steps and no little distrust of those who prophesy a new and different religion. It is the church of God in the world today that must explain herself to this generation. The eternal truth must be seen with the eyes of the modern age. And to be seen correctly or more correctly understood her doctrines must be translated into the vital terms of the day. And this day is undoubtedly materialistic. Consequently the translation of doctrine must be in materialistic terms. Why? To quicken a fresh interest in the old truth. We do not wish to surrender a fragment of the ancient creed nor generate an unwholesome skepticism of the eternal truth of the incarnation, but we do wish to realize more perfectly the value of this catholic trust as it affects our life here and now. The meaning of religion in material modes of thought—that is the main desideratum.

Such an applied Christianity must first become scientific in expression. The theologian must learn how to think and express himself in materialistic terms. This is the new baptism. The efficiency of the doctrine must be thought of in its formulation, the doctrine operative. In the great Wisdom psalm (Ps. 119) the true religious philosopher says, not "I have more understanding (*theoretical*) than my teachers," but "I have more *practical* understanding . . . for thy testimonies have been my study." A faith

of practical testimony must pass through a reduction to pragmatic terms.

I would suggest toward this end the scientific study of religious truth. We are bound to make mistakes at first, errors of over-simplification, but they will become profitable errors in the end. Understanding submitted to practical tests restores the mind to confidence and generates a fresh inspiration (interest). Thus only, I believe, can faith win modern scholastic approval and a university following. And an intellectual revival in theological interests is one of the most striking needs of the time. If the demand is strong enough it is bound to awaken a hearty response. But it is in the practical potentiality of religious thought that hope lies.

The following suggestions toward the beginning of a scientific dictionary of theology are tentatively made with the hope that they may lead to similar attempts on the part of others or at least stimulate a sympathetic criticism. The definitions are reduced to the briefest possible form in order to present the essential idea in the most unqualified way. They should be valued in the light of this deliberate simplicity.

Soul: the living organism.

Spirit: energy or force in operation.

Good: integration of energy.

Evil: disintegration of energy.

Sin: dissipation of energy.

Morality: conservation of energy.

Right: the intellectual criterion of good.

Conscience: moral inertia, i.e., the tendency of the will to persist either in a state of rest or motion in accord with the idea of right.

Repentance: emotional revolution of energy in accord with a reassertion of the idea of right.

Conversion: the recontrol and readjustment of dissipating energies.

Character: uniformity of energy.

Law: generalization of energy.

Holiness: unified energy.

Grace: the fulness of energy in human nature.

Church: the community or social organism constituted by virtue of individual union with a common center of the fulness of energy.

Religion: the interaction of energy in consciousness toward holiness.

Atonement: potential energies liberated.

Salvation: potentialities becoming actualities. (Cf. St. Paul's phrase, "the process of being saved.")

God: the primary force in its highest and widest connotation.

Trinity: force, energy, and power.

Immanence: energy qualified by phenomena.

Transcendence: energy unqualified by phenomena.

Infinite: immeasurable.

Finite: measurable.

Absolute: energy independent of any necessary relations outside a predetermined field.

Supernatural and miracle: inexact and meaningless terms in the field of pure energy. For example, it is *natural* for God to do miracles.

Inspiration: (energetic) interest.

Vision: truth-seeing.

Mercy: benevolent energy.

Charity: the energy of love.

Faith: a form of intellectual energy which accepts anything as true in so

practical a manner as to compel trust and to generate loyalty.

Prayer: petition for energy.

Praise: thanksgiving for energy received.

Worship: reverence for energy.

Sacrifice: contribution of energy.

It is not the place here to attempt an apologetic for the position taken, but the briefest suggestions toward such a course may be made. It may be helpful to suggest that the term "energy" as used in the New Testament is always employed with reference to that which is superior to the human; that the word for God in the Old Testament (*El*) in its primary significance denotes essential force; that the identity of spirit with force operative is the fundamental idea of Paul in this regard (cf. Col. 1:29;

2:12 and Eph. 1:19 in the Greek); that the person of the Holy Spirit is interpreted by Luke in terms of power (cf. Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8 in the Greek). Thus one may reason back from power through energy to force in line with the Trinity. The idea of holiness as unified energy, emphasizing the oneness or wholeness of spirit, results in a synthesis of spiritual efficiency by virtue of the inherent power resident in a thing. Also the transition of moral life in terms of energy easily suggests an apologetic consistent with the main tenets of both Christian morality and scientific ethics. Finally it may not be irrelevant to state that the notion of force need not subtract from the nature of personality, nor need the idea of energy undermine the fulness of the personality of God.